

BRIEFS

NRB TO SHINE LIGHT ON INTERNET CENSORSHIP

WASHINGTON (BP) — National Religious Broadcasters (NRB) is drawing attention to online censorship of Christian and conservative speech by tech companies such as Facebook, Twitter, Google, and Apple by launching a new initiative called Internet Freedom Watch. The program has already documented speech takedowns by the companies with the release of a chart at InternetFreedomWatch.org of more than 30 instances of such internet censorship. NRB also is calling on Congress to hold hearings on the "severe problem of viewpoint censorship on the Internet."

MORE COUNTRIES OK SAME SEX MARRIAGE

CANBERRA, Australia (BP) — Associated Press reports that Australia's Parliament and an Austrian court last week brought legalized same sex marriage to their respective countries, joining at least 25 other nations including the U.S. where the practice is now accepted. Germany and Malta also joined the list earlier this year, and lawmakers in Chile began debating the issue last month. The Netherlands started the move toward same sex marriage in 2000, followed by Belgium in 2003.

ILL. PRO-LIFERS FIGHT NEW ABORTION LAW

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. (BP) — Opponents of an Illinois law that would allow state funding of abortion on demand for state employees and Medicaid recipients have filed suit. After Republican Gov. Bruce Rauner signed the law earlier this year, the Thomas More Society filed suit on behalf of 10 pro-life organizations, the Roman Catholic Diocese of Springfield in Illinois, and eight state legislators filing as taxpayers. The suit, a request to "restrain and enjoin" a misuse of tax dollars, points out Illinois cannot afford the abortions it has promised to cover and has already violated the state's balanced budget law this year.

Leaders speak out on Jerusalem decision

JERUSALEM (BP and local reports) — U.S. President Donald Trump fulfilled a campaign promise on Dec. 6 when he formally recognized Jerusalem as Israel's capital, a move applauded by Israel's defenders but con-

demned around the Arab and Muslim worlds.

With the declaration, Trump also ordered the U.S. State Department to begin preparations to move the U.S. Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

Southern Baptist leaders

expressed their views on the move by Trump.

Former Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) presidents Ronnie Floyd, who served from 2014-16 and is senior pastor of Cross Church in northwestern



FLOYD



GRAHAM

see JERUSALEM on p. 7

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- Best responses for Active Shooter situations

MBCB to offer safety seminars

Five training sessions scheduled for January

JACKSON, Ms. (Special) — With the number of church-involved violent incidents like Sutherland Springs skyrocketing around the country, the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board is taking steps to ensure churches here are prepared if such evil comes to their doors.

The Board is sponsoring five sessions in January featuring one of the top church safety and security trainers in the U.S. — Fort Sherman Academy from Pinehurst, Idaho. (fortshermande.org/)

"Fort Sherman Academy trains and supports organizations in faith-based security and risk management. We assist in the furtherance of their mission by training them to better avoid, protect, and survive potential or actual adverse events thus allowing them to reach every corner of the globe," according to the academy's web site.

The day-long seminars are scheduled from 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. in the following locations:

■ Gulfport: January 8 at First Baptist Church

■ Hattiesburg: January 9 at Main Street Baptist Church.

■ Batesville: January 22 at First Baptist Church.

■ Tupelo: January 23 at Harrisburg Baptist Church.

■ Byram: January 24 at Country Woods Baptist Church.

Registration is \$25 per person and includes handouts and other materials. Lunch is also included. Seating is limited to 150 people at each venue with a maximum of five people per church, so early registration is encouraged.

To register, visit mbcb.org. For more information, contact Sandy Bell at sbell@mbcb.org. Telephone: (601) 292-3310 or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651, ext. 310. Web site: mbcb.org.

All verses important to meaning of carols

NASHVILLE (BP) — Andrew Lucius believes singing only the first verse of familiar carols could leave worshipers spiritually malnourished.

The associate pastor of music and worship at Buil Street Church in Savannah, Ga., is urging churches not to neglect subsequent verses of favorite Christmas hymns like Joy to the World!, Silent Night, Hark! The Herald Angels Sing, and O Come, All Ye Faithful.

He believes those verses shape worshipers' souls and are rich in theological truth like:

■ "Son of God, love's pure light."

■ "Veiled in flesh the Godhead see, hail the incarnate deity."

see CAROLS on p. 5

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From the editor

WILLIAM PERKINS

One company's success

You know about Chick-fil-A, don't you? That mean, homosexual-hating, traditional-marriage-loving chicken sandwich restaurant from where else but that backward region of the country known as, "the South?" The Christian-owned company that pays the way each year for hundreds of poor youngsters to attend summer camp, and sets aside a dressed table every Veteran's Day for the ones who didn't make it back home? The folks that support "hate groups" like the Fellowship of Christian Athletes?

Maybe you've heard militant activists complain about how Chick-fil-A browbeats its employees. (Chick-fil-A CEO Dan Cathy: "Enrich your life and in turn, you'll enrich the lives of others.")

Perhaps you're troubled by reports promoted by those activists with an agenda about the way the company treats its customers. (Cathy, again: "The word 'restaurant' means place of restoration, and we think of Chick-fil-A as an oasis where people can be restored.")

Why, Chick-fil-A is such a sinister force for injustice and mistreatment that none other than New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio, a Democrat, called for a boycott of the company's restaurant on Manhattan. (Headline: "Hungry customers line up around block at Chick-fil-A's new Manhattan location.")

Considering all those egregious human rights violations committed by the company, probably the worst accusations deal with their continual mistreatment of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) community. Ergo, I offer a story uncovered by Todd Starnes of Fox News (excerpted):

Normally Chick-fil-A is closed on Sunday so workers can go to church or spend time with their families or just sit on the front porch in a rocking chair and wave to passersby. So when I received word through some of our readers that several Chick-fil-A restaurants in Orlando had opened their doors on Sunday — I was a bit intrigued.

Hours after the gunman had massacred 49 people and woun-

ed dozens more in the Pulse nightclub, the community sprang into action. One of the most inspiring photographs showed hundreds and hundreds of people waiting in long lines for hours to donate blood.

Team members at two nearby Chick-fil-A restaurants figured those folks must be getting hungry. So somebody flipped on the lights and they started frying chicken. Before long they were serving sandwiches and nuggets and sweet tea to all the folks waiting to donate blood — along with a host of law enforcement personnel.

"We love our city and love the people in our community," a team member wrote on the restaurant's Facebook page.

The following day many of their restaurants provided free chicken biscuits and orange juice to firefighters and police officers and first responders. "We are appalled by the senseless crime that was committed this weekend, but we are part of a community that stands strong and stands together," they wrote on Facebook.

Funny how that works, isn't it? In all the secular criticism that has been showered on Chick-fil-A's alleged social shortcomings for the past several years, pro-LGBT militants and their tawny news media servants seemed to have overlooked Chick-fil-A's gracious and — dare we say it — Christian response to the Orlando travesty (Mark 2:27).

Maybe that kind of Christian corporate attitude is why Chick-fil-A does more business during its six-day week than McDonald's does in seven days, and could possibly explain why turnover among Chick-fil-A employees is one-third of the industry average. (Source: SAS Business Analysis).

Or maybe it's simply the blessing that comes from the Statement of Purpose practiced by the company every business day: "To glorify God by being a faithful steward of all that is entrusted to us. To have a positive influence on all who come in contact with Chick-fil-A."

Yeah, maybe that's it.

Giving, well-spent

While we have been seeing Christmas advertisements for weeks the Christmas season officially began with Black Friday, Small Business Saturday, and Cyber Monday. The focus of Christmas for most Americans, as you are well aware, has nothing to do with Jesus' birth. Society's focus is about retail, and retail in a big way.

I do not intend to curse the darkness that shrouds Christmas these days. It is what it is. We can buy into the materialism or bring a modicum of restraint to our approach to the season. The choice is ours. It may not be simple to keep the joy in Christmas and a sense of peace in the midst of the retail storm, but here are some ideas:

Lead in giving

Consider giving your largest-priced gift to honor the One whose birthday we Christians celebrate and make it a family affair. Bring your children alongside you in the next few days and ask them to pray with you in regard to the gift you will give to Jesus. You might even ask them to consider getting less so your family can give more.

There are several places where these gifts can be given to honor Jesus. I would suggest that one of the best places to give during the holidays is to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering through your local church. By giving to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering, you can augment the support your church gives to international missionaries through the Cooperative Program. Your Christmas gift will help tell the story of Jesus' birth, life, death, and resurrection, and will soon return in places where the Gospel is scarce.

Help people in need

Most churches ask their members to help provide Christmas food baskets for families in need. Let your children go to the grocery store or go through your food pantry with you as you prepare to give.

Additionally, among the many avenues of helping people during this time of year is Angel Tree. Let your children be a part of picking the toy or the gift to give. Use this time of year to teach your children that Christmas is more about giving than receiving.



Guest opinion

with Anthony Jordan

Contact a nursing home near you and ask if there are any residents who have no family. Let your children make cards and small gifts to give them. Take the time to visit and let your children share their love with the elderly and give the gifts.

There are probably some people in your church or down the street who would benefit from such kindness. Grandparents, you can come alongside your children and grandchildren to help relieve some of the time pressure.

Joy will fill your children's hearts as they see the difference such small acts of kindness can mean to someone who is lonely.

Give time

Yes, I know, these acts of kindness and love will take time, which is exactly what you don't have in the hustle and bustle of modern life. Yet, a well-spent hour or two is worth more than you can imagine to the people you bless. Greater still is the teaching opportunity you have to demonstrate tremendous lessons of the Christian faith and generous giving to your family.

As always, when you act to bless, in the end, you and your family will be blessed. When you fall exhausted into your chair on Christmas night and watch your children play with that popular toy, you will experience more joy over your acts of kindness than anything else done at Christmastime.

Jordan is executive director of the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma. This column first appeared in the convention's news journal, The Baptist Messenger (baptistmessenger.com), and appears here courtesy of Baptist Press. Edited for style.

THE BaptistRecord

Editor
William H. Perkins Jr.
wperkins@mbcb.org

Associate Editor
Tony Martin
tmartin@mbcb.org

Layout/Design
Megan Young
myoung@mbcb.org

Advertising
Dana Richardson
drichardson@mbcb.org

Circulation Manager
Amy Massey
amassey@mbcb.org

Baptist Record Advisory Committee:
Whit Lewis, New Albany
Derrick Wilson, Kaskaskia
Carolyn Reeves, Oxford
Garland Boyd, Brookhaven
Lucy Stringer, Foxworth
Don Hicks, Bay Springs

Postmaster:
Send changes of address to: The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530.

Send news, communication, and address changes to: The Editor, Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530.

Tel: (601) 968-3800
Fax: (601) 292-3330
E-mail: baptistrecord@mbcb.org

BAPTISTS

VOLUME 141 • NUMBER 49 • ISSN 0005-5778

Published weekly except weeks of July 4 and Christmas by the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, 515 Mississippi Street, Jackson, MS 39201. Subscription \$11.99 per year payable in advance. Economy plans available for cooperating Mississippi churches. Periodicals postage paid at Jackson, MS. Member, Association of State Baptist Papers. Deadlines: News items — one calendar week prior to requested publication date. Advertising — two calendar weeks prior to requested publication date. All submissions are subject to editing.

Pope Francis promotes altering of Lord's Prayer

VATICAN CITY (BP) — The pope of the Roman Catholic Church created a stir when he suggested recently that a phrase in the Lord's Prayer could be changed to better reflect its meaning.

The comment by Pope Francis that "lead us not into temptation" is a poor translation of a famous line from the Lord's Prayer has generated discussion of Bible translation and the differences between Protestant and Catholic beliefs about Scripture.

R. Albert Mohler Jr., president of Southern Seminary in Louisville, Ky., and Benjamin Merkle, professor of New Testament and Greek at Southeastern Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C., both said the pope made a good theological point in denying God tempts humans to sin — but Mohler called it "almost breathtaking" that Francis would suggest revising a time-honored Bible translation.

Merkle said the traditional translation is "a fair rendering of the Greek text" but noted that a less literal translation, slightly different lines than the pope suggested, may help readers understand the verse's meaning more accurately.

The pope's comments aired Dec. 6 as part of a nine-episode commentary on the Lord's Prayer by TV2000, a television station owned by the Italian Conference of Roman Catholic Bishops. Asked about new wording of the Lord's Prayer adopted for

corporate recitation by Catholics in France, the pope said the common rendering of Matthew 6:13 is "not a good translation," according to media reports.

A better translation, Francis said, might be, "do not let us fall into temptation."

God does not lead humans into temptation, Francis said in Italian, according to The Washington Post. "It's I, the one who falls, not Him pushing me toward temptation, so as to then see how I fall. No, well, a Father won't do that. A Father will immediately help you pick yourself up. Satan's the one leading you into temptation. That's Satan's task."

The National Catholic Register noted Francis was not calling for any official change in the Roman Catholic liturgy.

Mohler said the pope's commentary on Matthew 6:13 both inaccurately portrays the nature of Scripture and "misconstrues... the task of translation."

Mohler said because every word of the Bible is divinely inspired, humans do not have the right to decide what Jesus actually meant in Scripture "and then to conform the text to our expectations."

Mohler told The New York Times he was "shocked and appalled" at Francis' suggestion about revising the Lord's Prayer. "This is the Lord's Prayer. It is not, and has never been, the pope's prayer, and we have the very words of Jesus in the New Testament."

"It is those very words that the pope proposes to change. It is not only deeply problematic, it's almost breathtaking."

Mohler noted in The Briefing that when it comes to Bible translation, different scholars may render the same Greek verse in

slightly different ways but Francis wrongly substituted "explanation" of Matthew 6:13 for translation.

Explaining the biblical text, Mohler said, is different than either formal equivalence Bible translations which translate the original text word for word, or dynamic equivalence translations which translate the original text thought for thought.

The Greek verb *eisphero* ("lead") in the first part of Matthew 6:13 "clearly involves God as an actor and not just as a preventer of action," observed Mohler, a longtime student of Catholic theology.

The word commonly translated "temptation" (*peirasmos*), "actually means either temptation or testing" and references the type of activity Job experienced in the Old Testament and that Jesus experienced in the wilderness — both under God's sovereign permission, Mohler stressed.

Francis' latest comments on the Lord's Prayer were not the first time this pope has set forth controversial doctrinal views. In October, he appeared to contradict the Catholic Church's official teaching when he suggested capital punishment is always immoral.

On a previous occasion, he seemed to suggest the Catholic Church should revise its prohibition of granting communion to divorced and remarried people. He also has asked, "Who am I to judge" individuals who identify as homosexual.

Merkle told Baptist Press that although it is possible the pope's interpretation of Matthew 6:13 is inaccurate, his interpretation is not new and is affirmed by many leading evangelical scholars.

"The Bible is clear that God



POPE FRANCIS

does test His people for their good (see, e.g., Gen 22:1; Deut 8:2; Matt 4:1)," Merkle said in written comments. "Yet, it is contrary to His nature to tempt believers to sin. Consequently, the literal translation of this verse may not be the best, especially if many are prone to misunderstand it."

"Perhaps that is why some modern English versions have

offered alternative readings. The New International Reader's Version (NIRV) translates the phrase, 'Keep us from falling into sin when we are tempted.' Similarly, the New Living Translation (NLT) renders it: 'And don't let us yield to temptation,'" Merkle said, referencing two dynamic equivalence translations.

Evangelism Task Force gathers at Southwestern



IN PRAYER — Members of the Southern Baptist Convention's evangelism task force paused to pray Dec. 5 on the campus of Southwestern Seminary in Ft. Worth during the second of three scheduled meetings. (BP photo courtesy of SWBTS)

Task Force met Dec. 5 to share recommendations that will be considered for a final report to the Southern Baptist Convention's 2018 annual meeting in Dallas.

The task force gathered on the campus of Southwestern Seminary in Ft. Worth for the second of three scheduled meetings. SBC President Steve Gaines, senior pastor of Bellevue Church in suburban Memphis, appointed the task force during the SBC annual meeting in June to focus on how Southern Baptists might be more effective in personal soul winning and evangelistic preaching.

Paige Patterson, president of Southwestern Seminary and chairman of the task force, referred to the latest meeting as "simply remarkable." "Members representing various theological perspectives, multiple age groups, and every geographical section of America came together

with harmony seldom exhibited anywhere in the common cause of reaching men and women for Christ," he said.

"Watching these men work evoked the strongest hope I have had for the future of Southern Baptists."

Having utilized their first meeting in August to study evangelism and prayerfully seek the will of God, the team used their second meeting to begin formulating recommendations that will eventually be compiled and revised into their report to the convention.

Following the group's first meeting, Patterson said he hoped they would help "harness the energies of our churches for an assault on the kingdom of Satan and guide us in the witness of Southern Baptists to a fallen world."

In addition to Patterson and Gaines, those in attendance at

the second meeting were Jim Richards, executive director of the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention in Dallas; pastors Jordan Easley, Nick Floyd, J.D. Greear, Doug Munton, and Jimmy Scroggins; Midwestern Seminary professor Robert Matz; New Orleans Seminary professor Preston Nix; Southeastern Seminary professors Alvin Reid and Jim Shaddix; Southern Seminary professor Adam Greenway; and Southwestern Seminary professors David Allen and Matt Queen.

Matt Queen, Southwestern's chair of evangelism, noted his optimism following the meeting.

"We spent time in concerted prayer and I believe God, out of that time of prayer, through His Holy Spirit, directed us in such a way that we can bring a report to the convention that will be accepted and help us reclaim our heritage as an evangelistic denomination."

Christmas is filled with food ... fun ... folks ... frustrations ... family ... and fabulous OPPORTUNITIES! My advice and encouragement is, don't miss them. Someone once said that opportunity knocks, but it doesn't knock the door down. This Christmas, stay alert to opportunities that might come your way and ask God to give you spiritual discernment to see and know the opportunities that you need to grab.

Think about it. What would have happened if the shepherds had just yawned and gone to sleep after the angelic announcement? How sad to think about them missing life's greatest opportunity - that of coming to see Jesus. What if the wise men, a farther distance away scanning the skies and seeing the star, had acted unwisely and not followed through? Thankfully, the story of the birth of Jesus is filled with Christmas opportunities that were seen and scooped up and are celebrated to this very day.

No doubt that during these days you will have an opportunity to write a note to someone, go to a Christmas worship service, visit a friend, share a special gift, write a check to your church, go caroling, call someone with whom you have not spoken in years to mend a broken relationship, share a meal, or put some money in the kettle at the mall. There are thousands of opportunities that may come your way and, while you may feel you can't participate in every one of them, don't miss the ones toward



Christmas Opportunities

which God is directing you. Enjoy the opportunities and the blessings that will follow.

It seems like only yesterday, but it has been over forty years since my dad passed away. While through the year I may think of him often, at Christmas I reminisce about an unusual blessing God provided for my family and me. When Shirley and I got married and before we had children, we would go and see our parents on Christmas. We had talked about once we had children we would be at home on Christmas creating our own traditions and memories, and that's what we did. Our house would be a place of joy and merriment and memory making, and it was.

One year, however, it seemed the Lord was putting on our hearts the fact that my mother and dad were going to be celebrating Christmas alone. Though we lived hours away, we felt we needed to share Christmas with them in their home. After talking with them and each other, we decided we would do that. We piled all the stuff for Christmas in the car and put the kids in there and off we drove a day or two before Christmas to my parents' home.

We had no real reason, it seemed, to be doing that other than we just felt it was right and the Lord wanted us to share our Christmas celebration with my parents. It was a good time. We enjoyed it. They enjoyed it. The kids enjoyed it. It was an opportunity that

I am forever blessed we did not miss. As we rarely are able to know or calculate these things, it was my dad's last Christmas with us and we were there and the memories are forever. In the early part of the next spring my dad, though still a young man, was gone from this earth and home in the Father's house.

Looking back on that Christmas and the opportunity we took to change events a little bit so we could be with my parents, it will forever be a blessing in all my family's lives. You and I both will probably almost unknowingly have opportunities come to us like that to speak to someone, to go a little bit out of our way to touch their lives or be blessed by their presence, and you just sense, "This is right." It is God guiding you. Just follow Him. Watch what He does as you are captured by and maybe capture a Christmas opportunity.

For the shepherds and even for the wise men, if they had just ignored what God was doing around them we may never have heard anything about it and they could not have imagined what they missed. As God blesses your life and your family and presents to you Christmas opportunities to do something significant for Him and with Him and in your life, take advantage of what could well be for you experiences of a lifetime.

The author can be contacted at directions@mbcb.org.

Church security: Plans must first include risk assessment

FOURTH IN A SEVEN-PART SERIES

By Chester L. Quarles (1944-2013)
Correspondent

Before you can develop a strong church security plan, you must complete a risk assessment. Your local police department's crime prevention unit can be of service here. They can tell you of crimes in your neighborhood and crimes against other churches in their jurisdiction. Knowledge is your first line of defense!

The word, "risk," implies any possibility of loss or attack. To a novice, it seems a vague and elusive term. Risk assessment is usually historical. We need to know what has gone before. We need to know if an incident at another church could happen at our church, then we can make a list of the threats and weaknesses which most concern our membership.

We can look at crime trends and then rate our information by assigning a reliability factor to it. The police crime prevention unit can help prioritize your risks.

Risk avoidance attempts to remove or decrease exposure. Occurrence reduction attempts to reduce the activities through which a threat might be accomplished. Risk acceptance is what most churches do now - nothing! It basically relies on the myth that there is very little that you can do to prevent or deter crime.

Risk spreading involves assigning functions to multiple individuals so that the loss impact is reduced. An example of this would be using the "2+ Rule" (two or more people together reduce the threat of street crime by 67%). For example, if two or more people take the offering to the bank, the risk is spread.

Risk transfer usually involves the insurance industry or sharing the loss with another party,

such as an armored car service, thus minimizing loss.

The risk assessment is an absolutely necessary component of any viable security plan. Risk management is a moral and a legal responsibility. It should be noted, however, that security analyses, policies, plans and procedures may be subpoenaed in the event of a premises liability lawsuit.

While the total lack of security planning is a strong negative issue, the problem of failing to live up to your own policies, procedures, and plans will certainly be exploited by opposing legal counsel in a lawsuit.

Vulnerability indices involve identifying specific threats. What are the primary threats? Vandalism, burglary, arson, robbery, internal fraud, and kidnapping are people-caused threats. Earthquakes, floods, tornadoes, and fires should also be considered in your risk factors.

Probability factors are significant. Are you situated in a high-crime or a low-crime area? Are members of your congregation reasonably concerned about threat, loss, or risk? Have there been any specific threats against your facility, your congregation, or your church leaders?

Criticality refers to the consequence of a particular risk. If your church treasurer steals the building fund, then you aren't going to build that addition. If a non-custodial parent takes a child out of your nursery, then many worshippers won't leave their children in your nurseries.

Risk assessments can help you manage your risks realistically.

Quarles, who died in October 2013, was professor emeritus of criminal justice and homeland security at the University of Mississippi, and co-author of the book, *Crime Prevention for Houses of Worship*. Copyright 2011. Used by permission. This series originally appeared aperiodically in *The Baptist Record* during 2011 and 2012.

OBITUARIES

Greg Wood, International Mission Board missionary for 11 years in an indigenous Mexican village, died Dec. 5 from aggressive brain cancer. The Indiana native was 48 years old. Wood was appointed



WOOD

on Jan. 25, 2005, supported by his home church, Biltmore Church in Arden, N.C. While on the mission field with his wife and three children, Wood strived to learn the Purepecha language and shared Bible stories. He started several churches and saw many people baptized. In addition to his wife, Wood is survived by children Jerod, Alex, and Annie; his mother, Charlene Wood, and father, Boyce Wood. Funeral services were held Dec. 9, at Arlington Church in Mint Hill, N.C.

Merle Walley Courtney of Thomasville, Ga., former assistant editor of *The Baptist Record* in the late 1940s, died December 5 at the age of 92. Born August 2, 1925 in Greene County, she was the wife of Mississippi and Georgia pastor Rutledge E. Courtney who preceded her in death. She graduated from Mississippi College in 1947. Survivors include daughter and son-in-law Becky and Steve Rainey of Albany, Ga.; sons and daughters-in-law, John and Stephanie Courtney and Mark and Tracy Courtney of Thomasville, Ga.; six grandchildren; and eleven great-grandchildren. Allen and Allen Funeral Home of Thomasville, Ga., was in charge of arrangements. Family and friends are invited to visit and sign her online guest register at www.allenfh.com.

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Religious liberty defenders encouraged after hearing

WASHINGTON (BP) — Religious liberty advocates left the U.S. Supreme Court Dec. 5 with some hope that the justices will rule in favor of a Colorado cake artist who refused to design a wedding cake for a same sex wedding celebration.

The high court heard oral arguments in a major free-speech and free-exercise-of-religion case at the center of the contentious debate between religious liberty and sexual liberty.

Multiple cases involving wedding vendors who oppose using their talents in support of same sex marriage are being contested in the courts, but it was an appeal by Jack Phillips and his Masterpiece Cakeshop that gained the justices' consideration first.

The Supreme Court's decision, expected before its term ends in late June or early July 2018, is expected to be pivotal in determining how much liberty is possessed by Christians and others in the face of governmental requirements that they believe violate their consciences.

Phillips, who is a Christian, declined to design and decorate a cake for the wedding of two men because of his belief that marriage is between only a male and a female. He told the couple he would make and sell them all other baked items.

After the men filed a complaint with the state, the Colorado Civil Rights Commission ordered Phillips to create custom cakes for same-sex ceremonies or quit

designing wedding cakes. He stopped designing wedding cakes.

The commission also ordered him to re-educate his employees on complying with the Colorado Anti-discrimination Act, which includes sexual orientation as a protected class.

When Phillips appealed, the Colorado Court of Appeals upheld the commission's order and the Colorado Supreme Court declined in 2016 to review the decision.

U.S. Supreme Court Associate Justice Anthony Kennedy, a frequent swing vote on the court, provided encouragement to lawyers supporting Phillips with some of his questions and comments during the oral arguments.

Kennedy asked Frederick Yarger, Colorado's solicitor

general, if he would disavow the statement of a state civil rights commissioner who said, in the justice's words, "freedom of religion used to justify discrimination is a despicable piece of rhetoric."

Yarger disavowed the remark, and Kennedy later said, "Counselor, tolerance is essential in a free society, and tolerance is most meaningful when it's mutual. It seems to me that the state in its position here has been neither tolerant nor respectful of Mr. Phillips' religious beliefs."

Yarger said he didn't "agree that Colorado hasn't taken very seriously the rights of those who wish to practice their faith."

Kennedy took issue with an argument used by David Cole,

the ACLU's national legal director representing the homosexual couple, who said Phillips' refusal to design a cake was based on the homosexual identity of the men.

"[S]uppose [Phillips] - says, 'Look, I have nothing against gay people,'" Kennedy said. "He says, 'But I just don't think they should have a marriage because that's contrary to my beliefs.'"

In response, Cole contended "there's no question that identity discrimination is involved here because, again, the only thing the baker knew was the identity of the people" involved.

Kennedy disagreed, saying, "It's not their identity. It's what they're doing... Your identity thing is just too facile."

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CAROLS

cont. from p. 1

■ "Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing."

Scott Aniol, associate professor of church music at Southwestern Seminary in Ft. Worth, told Baptist Press, "If you skip a stanza, you're missing a chunk of the narrative."

Third stanzas of hymns generally tend to be the narrative's climax, followed by fourth stanzas that conclude the author's line of thinking, he noted. "It's ironic that we often skip that third stanza," he said.

One reason churches tend to eliminate theologically-rich verses from Christmas hymns may be that worshipers are ac-



ANIOI



LUCIUS



HARLAND

customed to brief, three-minute songs in secular pop and country music repertoires that constitute their daily music exposure. Thus, hymns may be shortened to fit a similar time frame, Aniol observed.

Lucius speculated that some middle verses may be skipped in Christmas carols and other hymns because they tend to mention sin and depravity, whereas first and last stanzas often major on happier topics.

First and last stanzas also are easier for musicians to read because the words are nearer to the notes on sheet music, he said.

Lucius contends singing only the first and last verses of Christmas songs can cause churches to mimic a common error within secular American

culture: focusing only on the sentimentality of baby Jesus in the manger without considering the salvation He came to win for humanity.

Mike Harland, director of Life-Way Worship in Nashville and a former Mississippi worship leader, urged churches not only to sing neglected verses of carols but also hymns that tend to be neglected altogether.

"Whoever is planning worship should understand they are a curator of an almost infinite amount of [musical] material and they need to be very informed. Any worship leader... would be well served to find some old hymns, do some research, and find some of the rich, beautiful texts that come from some of these classic Christmas carols that, quite frankly, may be overlooked.

The three worship leaders offered suggestions for working neglected content into this year's Christmas worship:

- Sing fewer hymns but more verses.
- Organize times of carol singing outside normal worship services.
- Sing medleys of carols that include only lesser-known verses.
- Don't shy from singing musically challenging hymns.

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QDT JXUHU IXQBB RU IYWDI YD JXU

IKD, QDT YD JXU CEED, QDT YD JXU

IJQHI; QDT KFED JXU UQHJX TYIJHUI

EV DQJYEDI, MYJX FUHFBUNYJO;

JXU IUQ QDT JXU MQLUI HEQHYDW.

BKAU JMUDJO-EDU: JMUDJO-VYLU

Clue: B = L

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Acts 9:5

By Charles Marx, 1932-2004. © 2005

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THE VILLAGE VIEW



Sean A. Milner, Executive Director
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GIFTS OF HONOR AND MEMORY

A portion of The Village View is allocated each month to a list of Gifts of Honor and Memory. Many groups and individuals elect to pay tribute to others through this sensitive, meaningful, and helpful medium. This feature is hopefully designed to further honor with taste and respect those who are and have been special to our special friends.

NOVEMBER 16-30

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Merry CHRISTMAS & HAPPY NEW YEAR

from all of us at
The Baptist Children's Village

MAY THE GOD OF HOPE
FILL YOU WITH ALL JOY
AND PEACE IN BELIEVING,
SO THAT BY THE POWER OF
THE HOLY SPIRIT YOU MAY
ABOUND IN HOPE.

ROMANS 15:13 ESV

BCV EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

The BCV employs Christian, mission-minded, husband and wife teams, without dependent children or pets, to serve in the position of Houseparents. The couples must be mature Christian adults with personal integrity, character and of good reputation with standards and ethics expected of any member of The Baptist Children's Village staff.

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To apply for the current Houseparent openings, please contact Celeste Cade at ccade@baptistchildrensvillage.com or 601-922-2242.

A complete job description and application may be downloaded at www.baptistchildrensvillage.com.

Misguided Worship • Acts 14:8-20

I hope as we travel through the book of Acts we will not only see it as history but also as a training manual for the church. We know what the disciples did in the book of Acts worked, so we do not need to reinvent the wheel. The struggles they had and conquered can serve as encouragement to us when faced with similar situations.

There are major lessons to be learned from this book, the first, we learned last week: **Any endeavor we make for the kingdom must be led by the Holy Spirit.** This is important, because there is an enemy who will try to stop or at least discourage us at every point.

As Paul and Barnabas continued on their journey of spreading the gospel, Acts 14 illustrates 3 ways the disciples could have felt defeated and tempted to quit had they not been led by the Spirit.

The first distraction was division among those who heard and believed in Iconium where the leaders "stirred up and poisoned the minds" against the brothers. (verse 2) Personally I would have quit, but what was the response of the disciples? Verse 3 says, "So, they stayed there a long time and spoke boldly for the Lord...[who] enabled them to do signs and wonders." The enemy caused division among the church thinking this would halt the preaching, yet the Spirit

enabled the disciples to boldly speak truth. When we are faced with division, we can call upon the Holy Spirit's power to help us. Paul and Barnabas eventually left Iconium and traveled to Lystra and continued to preach. When we rely on the Holy Spirit, division will not deter the message.

Since causing division did not work, the next plot was using pride. The Holy Spirit had enabled the disciples to heal a lame man in Lystra and upon seeing this mira-



Explore the Bible with Cyndi Grace

cle, the people began to worship the disciples, even bowing to them. Had the disciples not been keenly aware of the Spirit's leading, they might have fallen for this tactic and relished in this tribute. Instead they remained true, giving all glory to God. We must be aware how easy it is to praise a pastor or leader when good things happen in our congregation. However, we must be acutely aware that God alone should receive honor and glory for accomplishments in the church.

When the disciples refused the accolades, and stated that only through the one true God were these things done, the people turned against them. They along with Jews from Iconium and Antioch intensified the dissension which led to the 3rd tactic of the enemy: The threat of death!

Surely the threat of death would end the menace of Christianity, but Satan is a slow learner. If killing Jesus didn't work then neither would death threats stop the

spread of the Gospel. Although Paul was stoned and left for dead, he got up, went back into the town, and left the next day for Derbe, where he preached

even more boldly and made many disciples (vs.21) Paul and Barnabas then did the unthinkable; they returned to the very towns where they were threatened in order to strengthen the followers and to appoint leaders who would continue the work.

Acts 14:22 (CSB) reads, "...strengthening the disciples by encouraging them to

continue in the faith and by telling them, 'It is necessary to go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God.' " It is here that Paul gives us the second great lesson in building the kingdom: **If we are to spread the gospel we must be ready to suffer for the gospel.** Jesus said much the same thing when He said, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me, Luke 9:23 (ESV)

Following Jesus, and doing His work here on earth requires more than just desire or obligation. It requires the leading and empowering of the Spirit of God and an enduring in hardships. What we see as the church was birthed, was an amazing power to accomplish great things for the kingdom. Neither division, pride, nor threat of death stifled the disciples. Paul and Barnabas were sent out by the Holy Spirit, they did what God said, and the kingdom grew among the Gentiles. We have access to that very same power in the church today if only we would take advantage of it. We have no excuse from continuing the work they began.

Grace is a Bible teacher and conference speaker and is a member of First Church, Clinton.

Jesus Rules • Mark 4:35-41

Camille Katrina Harvey. If you look closely, you will notice this is not your typical list of names. It is also not the names on my Christmas shopping list. These are the names of three of the most memorable hurricanes in history. While living in Mississippi has its advantages, the threat of severe weather is not one of them. Tornadoes, flooding, and other dangerous weather conditions are all common within our borders. Storms the size and strength of tornadoes and hurricanes can take lives, destroy homes and businesses, and change the landscape of any community or city. Of course, we know storms are nothing new and we are not the only ones that experience the accompanying stress of bad weather headed for our homes or loved ones.

In the closing verses of Mark 4 we get a glimpse of the disciples amid a terrible storm. It was a storm so strong that all 12 of the grown men thought they were about to die. Do not forget as you study the Scripture we have the benefit of knowing how the story ends. They did not. It may be easy to dismiss them as weak in the faith, but the same could be said of you and me at times. It is imperative for Christians to be free from scoff-

ing and judging others going through storms of heartache or trouble.

I have an app on my phone set to notify me when severe weather is in my area. Wouldn't it be impressive to have an indication when we are about to enter one of life's storms? Of course, something of that nature will never exist. However, we have access to something better, and His name is Jesus. I am 39 years old and I do not pretend to know

it all, but I am learning this fact increasingly: Jesus is enough, and Jesus is all I need. This assurance is sufficient to carry me through the storms that have surfaced in my life. You do not commit yourself to following Christ and the ministry without facing challenging and complicated storms. Scottish author Ian MacLaren is credited with the quote, "Be kind, for everyone you meet is fighting a hard battle." This is true on many levels and we should treat everyone with grace and Christian love.

In our study this week, the disciples' circumstances appeared bleak. As soon as they seemed to process what was taking place, another wave crashed down on them. Can you relate? Their faith was weakening, the boat was sinking, the wind was howling, and Jesus was...napping! Napping? When I was a kid I could not comprehend why my parents or grandparents napped. These days, I start daydream-

ing about my Sunday afternoon nap on Thursday!

While not belittling the disciples, I do want to illustrate the power fear can have on someone.

Did you notice through this whole story Jesus says very little? However, what He says is unforgettable. Mark 4:35 records the words of Christ as "Let us go over to the other side." Even before a storm was in sight, Jesus had already told them where they were headed. When the storm became a reality, they forgot the words of Christ. Storms do not change nor negate

what Christ has promised. They allowed their fear to dictate their response. This is why Christ said to them in 4:40, "Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?" Fear can make you do strange and irrational things. The most tragic is forgetting the promises of our Lord. Even better, we have the presence of Christ within us no matter what we are facing.

After Jesus commanded the storm to cease, do you notice He did not give an explanation as to the power or purpose of the storm? He did not have to. In the same way, He may not reveal to you or me the reasons for the storms in our lives either. The truth is again, He is not bound to us to do so. Presbyterian theologian Frederick Buechner offers this keen insight: "God Himself does not give answers. He gives Himself." I do not know about you, but for me, that is sufficient and satisfying.

May I pray with you? Heavenly Father, storms are a reality in our lives, but so are You. God, I ask you to help us recall Your promises and Your presence when everything seems hopeless. You are enough, and You are greater than any storm I will face. Amen.

McKay is pastor of Harperville Church, Harperville.

Bible Studies for Life with Bobby McKay



JERUSALEM

cont. from p. 1

Arkansas, and Jack Graham, who served from 2002-03 and is senior pastor of Prestonwood Church in suburban Dallas, were among those to celebrate Trump's proclamation.

Jamal Bishara, an Arab Israeli who is a Baptist pastor and served on the Multiethnic Advisory Council appointed in 2014 by Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee President

Frank S. Page, called the "move," "another slap in the face to Palestinians."

Known as Mandatory Palestine prior to the creation of the State of Israel in 1948, the territory that includes Jerusalem is still claimed by the Palestinian people who also believe to this day that Jerusalem should be recognized as their capital.

"President Trump has incurred



BISHARA

blessing on America, for Scripture says God blesses those who bless Israel," said Floyd, who also serves as president of the National Day of Prayer Task Force.

Graham said in a statement, "As a Christian, I'm grateful America is playing a decisive role in the story of God's chosen people, and I'm very glad President Trump is displaying the courage to fulfill a promise to support Israel and its biblical role among the nations."

Bishara, pastor of First Arabic Church in Phoenix and a dual

Israeli-American citizen, told BP Jerusalem "maybe" should be the capital of both Israel and a Palestinian state — but he lamented what he perceives as "the tunnel vision and the prejudice of the Western world against Palestinians."

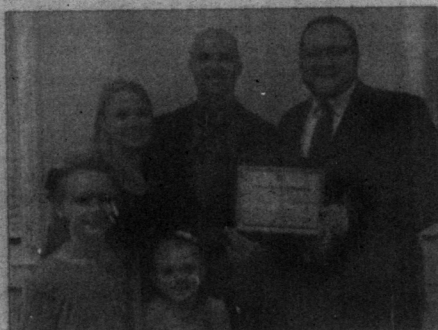
Bishara said such prejudice may be "deeply influenced based on wrong biblical interpretation of Scripture, racism, mistreatment of people, and violence to blacks in the U.S."

In 1993, the U.S. Congress adopted legislation regarding the

embassy to relocate to Jerusalem by 1999. However, U.S. Presidents Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, and Barack Obama all exercised a provision in the law allowing them to suspend the relocation.

A 2010 SBC resolution of prayer and support for Israel did not take a position on Jerusalem's geopolitical status but urged "messengers, prophets, and the Lord's peace to the people of Israel and for the salvation of the world and the gospel of Jesus Christ to be proclaimed to everyone and everywhere, first to the Jew, Romans 1:16."

Just for the Record



NEW HOPE CHURCH, FOXWORTH, ordained Tate Robertson as deacon Dec. 3. Shown are pastor Tim Parker, Robertson, and Lauren Macy, and Bryleigh Robertson.



FIRST CHURCH, LAUDERDALE, ordained Lucky Underwood to the deacon ministry Nov. 26. He is shown with his wife Stacey, Richie Davis, pastor.



WEST CHURCH, WEST, held a youth Sunday Dec. 3. Shown are the participants.



FAIR RIVER CHURCH, BROOKHAVEN, recently took their 2nd through 6th graders to a fall harvest maze. Shown are some of the participants. Jay Anderson, pastor.



The children's group at **ARLINGTON CHURCH, BOGUE CHITTO**, presented The Colors of Christmas Dec. 3. Shown are the participants.



The youth and children of **CALVARY CHURCH, VICKSBURG**, performed a Christmas program, The Colors of Christmas.

In other Church News:

► **Oakdale Church, Brandon**, is presenting the Christmas musical The Greatest Story Ever Told by Dennis and Nan Allen Dec. 17, 6:15 p.m.

Submission Guidelines

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention. News items and/or photographs depicting benefits and activities for secular or outside organizations will not be published.

Preferred method: news may be submitted electronically to the e-mail address below, and must be included in the message segment of an e-mail form. Secondary method: news may be typewritten or neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper and mailed. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone. Due to ever-present virus threats, no text attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments in JPEG format are permissible.

Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs must be submitted electronically

via e-mail, as attachments in JPEG format. **Hard copy photographs mailed through the postal service will not be accepted.** Photographs must be clear, sharp, and well-lighted. Photographs must depict people. No landscape, building, or object-only photographs will be printed. Photographs containing inappropriate gestures and objectionable clothing will not be published. Cell phone photographs and other low resolution items that do not reproduce well on newsprint are generally not publishable.

There is no guarantee that news items and/or photographs will be published, and unsolicited material will not be acknowledged or returned. All news items are subject to editing, and all photographs are subject to cropping. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date. Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis. These guidelines are not meant to be exhaustive.

Submit news to The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. FAX: (601) 292-3330. E-mail: baptistrecord@mbcb.org.

Need a light?

Jesus said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life." (John 8:12)

Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you. (I have sinned.)
2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (I repent.)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. (I believe in Jesus.)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. (I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

"But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name." (John 1:12)
If you make a decision for Christ today, contact a local Southern Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

END